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The Foochow Chinese: moving towards a pan-Chinese identity anchored to Mandarin

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Abstract: The study investigated the use of Mandarin and Chinese dialects, and attitudes towards these languages among the Foochow living in Sibü, Sarawak, Malaysia. The study involved 408 Foochow respondents (204 children, 204 parents). As most of the respondents' close friends, neighbours and colleagues were Foochow, and Chinese in general, Foochow and Mandarin were the two main languages used, but English, Malay and Iban were sometimes used with people from other ethnic groups. More parents felt at ease speaking Foochow in all situations but more children felt that it is nothing special to speak their dialect. The most cherished and emotionally expressive language for the parents was Foochow but for their children, it was Mandarin. More parents were aware of cultural associations and activities than their children. They believed that the use of Chinese dialects will decrease in future and intergenerational transmission of the dialect is important. Yet they were still looking to cultural associations and the government to promote their culture and dialect. The study indicated that the markers for membership of their Chinese dialect group are ancestry, language, living among people from the same dialect group, cultural practices and religion.

Keywords: Chinese dialects; identity; language attitudes; Malaysia; standard Chinese; 汉语方言; 语言态度; 身份

摘要: 本文调查了居住在马来西亚砂拉越州诗巫省的华人对于汉语和汉语方言之使用 and 态度。这项研究涉及了408名华人受访者(其中有204名子女, 204名父母)。多数受访者的亲朋好友和同事皆为福州籍华人, v主要语言以福州话和华语为主, 在与其他种族交谈之时, v会使用英语, 马来语和伊班语。多数父母在使用福州话对话和沟通上会更自在, 但华人子女会觉得使用方言沟通无特别之处。父母认为福州话是最佳表达情感的语言, 而子女则认为是华语。与子女相比, 更多的父母能意识到相关的籍贯文化活动, 他们认为未来华人对于汉语方言的使用会减少。父母与子女们认为汉语方言的代代相传极为重要, 但是, 他们仍希望更多

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